

# The New Compton Report



Edition 1— December 2004

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*Special “Year in Review” Issue!*

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## Compton Announces Start of Regular Newsletter:

Goal to “throw open the doors of City Hall”



Government belongs to the people, and must be open and understandable to those it serves. Open, transparent, engaging government can only happen if communication flows both ways. Along with my new assignment as Utilities and Technology Committee

Chair comes the new opportunity to connect with you and provide a behind-the-scenes look into the workings of the Seattle City Council. My goal is to regularly share with you an overview of developing issues, important utility and technology decisions, and most importantly, to inform you of my positions and opinions about City business. You deserve to know what City leaders are doing, and it is my duty and pleasure to bring it to you with this newsletter. I hope you enjoy the New Compton Report.

Best Regards,



## 2005-2006 Budget:

### “We Put People First”

This year has brought many changes to the Council. We have three new members, Councilmember Richard McIver is now Chair of the Budget Committee, and I have a new committee assignment. Here are some of the highlights of this year’s budget process:



Much of my work involved the “obscure” but critically important issue of drainage. The Mayor’s **Drainage Rate** proposal affected

a significant portion of SPU’s 2005-2006 budget projections, so a great deal of Utilities and Technology work and several meetings were necessary to get drainage rates decided.

Through careful scrutiny of the rate proposal, we were able to cut questionable street sweeping costs from the rate, delay and reduce other costs, include my Healthy Habitat Initiative, and still reduce the amount of the rate increase proposed by the Mayor.

There were numerous other issues I felt were important: I was proud to create and get funding for a **Community Production Opportunity Program**, a new initiative at the Seattle Channel to boost the linguistic and cultural diversity of Seattle Channel programming. The Channel’s manager Gary Gibson is currently developing an outreach plan to bring “new voices and faces” to our programming.

Restoring the **Police Accountability staff position** cut by the Mayor was critically important to me. In light of the recent survey results on perceptions of racial profiling, it is even more important that the City continue its strong support of the Office of Professional Accountability and offer this essential service to the community. It was a pleasure

partnering with Councilmember Licata and others on this issue.

**Domestic Violence** continues to be a top priority for me, even though I no longer chair the Council’s Public Safety Committee. I sponsored legislation to require confiscation of guns from perpetrators of DV. I also worked with several of my colleagues on drafting reporting requirements to get more useful data from the Police Department, the Municipal Court, and the Human Services Department.

There are also several items I was proud to **co-sponsor**, including: restoring the re-licensing programs for drivers; restoring community court programs; eliminating the proposal to charge parking fees at some neighborhood parks; restoring some of the funds for the Bookmobile and the Library Collections budget; and restoring funding for the Port Jobs program.

I was happy to support the addition of \$2.1-million in the 2005 budget and \$1.8-million in the 2006 budget for critically needed transportation improvements and street maintenance, restoration of \$300,000 to human services that was cut in the Mayor’s proposal, restoring the magistrates in the City’s Neighborhood Service Centers, the restoration of the proposed cuts to the Seattle Neighborhood Group, eliminating the proposed fee for the Conservatory, and the restoration of funding for the City’s contract with King County Bar Association Legal Clinics.

My colleagues and I were committed to the careful examination of this budget and were determined

to put people first. I believe we were successful, and I want to thank the thousands of citizens who contacted us with opinions and suggestions.



## Keep Monorail On Track: Compton Has Close Eye on Finances

The City Council has spent much of 2004 considering pieces of legislation addressing three key aspects of the Seattle Monorail Project: The Transit Way Agreement; the Design Guidelines; and the Alignment.

First, The Transit Way Agreement functions as an agreement between the Seattle Monorail Project and the City of Seattle and sets the conditions for construction of Green Line on city-owned public rights of ways such as roads and sidewalks.



The Council worked diligently to craft a TWA that provides solid protection of the City's interests provisions like insurance to protect private citizens and the City from unforeseen damage, requirements to negotiate a common fare structure and transfer policies with King County Metro, and my amendment to require an **independent project-wide financial audit**.

In addition to evaluating the viability of construction and operation, the independent review also will examine route plans and **common fare structures** across our public transit systems. I proposed this amendment to address the obvious need for thorough financial and fare structure review - information I believe Seattle's taxpayers deserve.

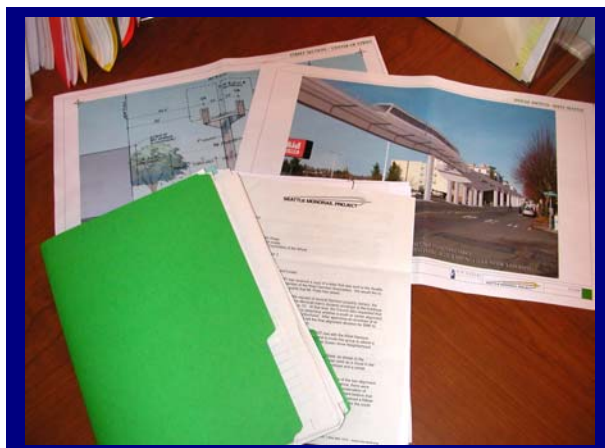
Second, the Council also took action to approve general guidelines concerning the urban design and access issues for all monorail facilities. These design guidelines will ensure adequate pedestrian, bicycle, and bus transfer access to stations for all citizens, and will ensure designs that complement the character of each **neighborhood** along the corridor.

Third, the Council approved an Alignment that establishes **conditions for guideways, stations, bridges** and other monorail facilities along the 14-mile corridor, including minimum distances required between trains and either property or sidewalks, and limitations on where guideways may be constructed.

The Council mandated a minimum distance of 14 feet between property and trains along the crucial downtown corridor along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, with similar minimum distance requirements in other neighborhoods. By asking transportation engineers and consultants the tough questions, the Council was able also to approve alignments that allow independent bicycle lanes whenever possible, enhance pedestrian flow, and minimize the loss of parking.

The voters of Seattle have expressed their support for the Monorail by not only voting to approve the independent transportation authority in 2002, but also rejecting the recall initiative this past November. I feel that my role as a Councilmember is to make certain that the monorail project is **well planned, financially viable, and accountable to Seattle's voters** who approved this project. I also want a project with minimal disruptions and negative impacts during and after construction to citizens, business owners, and communities along the corridor.

Finally, results of the financial audit will be due to the Council soon. My goal is to keep my eyes fixed on making sure we get what we pay for.





## New Solid Waste Transfer Facility



In April the Council approved an appropriation of \$4.7 million to SPU to perform an Environmental Impact Study for new solid waste transfer facilities, a process will likely take a year or more. I am happy to report that SPU Director Chuck Clarke told Councilmembers that this project would have a minimal impact on rates, with no increase in 2004 or 2005. SPU also projects that recycling could be increased by 5% by redesigning the existing transfer stations.

The construction of a new facility and the redesign of our two existing transfer stations will impact your future rates, your environment, and your recycling habits. It is my goal as a Councilmember to make sure our eventual plan is cost efficient, forward thinking, and guides us towards our environmental and social goals. Results of the EIS should come to the Committee sometime in 2005.

## Comprehensive Drainage Plan

Several years of work culminated with the December passage of a landmark document that will guide drainage policies for decades to come. Seattle Public Utilities brought forward a plan to address drainage, water quality, and transportation issues connected with our drainage utility. The Comprehensive



Drainage Plan covers all of the drainage utility's tasks and programs, including the nationally recognized and honored Natural Drainage Program. I was pleased to see that innovative programs like this one will continue to be nurtured and promoted in the coming years.

It is a thoughtful and comprehensive document that I was proud to bring through my committee for amendment, "tune up", and passage by the council at its last meeting of 2004.

## Broadband Task Force

In June the Council passed a resolution that I authored and sponsored to create the Broadband and Telecommunications Task Force. This group is exploring the feasibility of creating a municipally-owned wireless system, the possible uses of our public facilities and rights of way, and the possibility of making our telecommunications improvements help bridge the digital divide.

This is an immense opportunity to lead the nation and the world in energizing broadband communication within a city, and I am very excited and hopeful that the task force will bring the Council some incredible options. A municipal network could provide high-speed service to all areas of the City and possibly team up with private providers to bring down service costs. Updates, agendas and documents from the Task Force can be found at <http://www.cityofseattle.net/btt/> and we expect a report from them in Spring 2005.



## Reservoir Covers

Seattle's open reservoirs are integral parts of our parks, open spaces, and community, but they are also uniquely vulnerable. In April this year the Council voted to bury the open reservoirs in order to bring Seattle Public Utilities into compliance with the drinking water requirements of the State Department of Health. There has been much concern over the financial burden this project will have on consumers. I have worked hard to flatten out the costs to consumers and to make it manageable and fair. I am confident that our choice to bury the reservoirs will benefit Seattle's residents and ratepayers for years to come.



## Three Salmon Forums

This fall I hosted a series of three forum discussions on various aspects of salmon recovery, which were broadcast on the Seattle Channel. These forums featured panels of experts who joined me in the deep examination of issues such as the state of regional recovery efforts, recovering salmon runs in our urban environment, and the unique role of urban waterways, like Lake Washington and Lake Union, the ship canal and the Locks, in salmon recovery. We heard interesting insight from environmentalists, technical experts, and business and industry stakeholders. These salmon recovery forums have presented the public with the current activities and thinking of many who care deeply about Seattle's restoration of its threatened salmon runs. You can view these three forums and many other programs by going to [www.seattlechannel.org](http://www.seattlechannel.org) and going to the Video Archives. It's my goal to sponsor more informative forums on salmon and other topics in 2005.



## Compton Healthy Habitat Initiative

I am very pleased to announce that my colleagues unanimously passed a Council Resolution establishing the Aquatic Habitat Matching Grant program. This new grant program is similar to the popular Neighborhood Matching Fund, and will provide money to Seattle citizens, property owners, and organizations for projects that protect streams and improve fish habitat. It is, in my opinion, a modest amount of money for a big impact. The Council funded this program at \$300,000 in 2005 and 2006 while still approving a drainage rate lower than the Mayor's proposal for 2006. I look forward to getting this new program up and running in the new year!



# COMING UP IN 2005

## **Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement**

The City has designated its preferred alternative for replacement of the aging and vulnerable Viaduct with a 6-lane tunnel that will allow reclamation of Seattle's waterfront. The hard work next year will be dedicated to securing the funding necessary from State, regional, Federal, and other sources to make this project a reality.

## **Comcast Franchise Renewal**

In 2005 the City will begin its negotiations with Comcast Digital Media on the renewal of their cable franchise contract. While federal laws pre-empt the City in most cable regulation areas, the cable franchise is Seattle's best chance to get Seattle citizens high quality cable service at fair prices. Over the past five years I have worked very hard in areas where federal law allows us to regulate cable operations, and we have some of the strongest consumer protection regulations in the nation. Comments from citizens like you will be a critical part of this franchise renewal process, so I encourage you to keep an eye out for Utilities and Technology Committee briefings on this topic throughout the year.

## **Water Rates**

The Mayor's proposed water rates will be one of the first and most important issues the Utilities and Technology will take up in 2005. Debating rates and rate design is some of the most important work we do on the Council. Our utility rates have a direct affect on our citizens, and so I invite you to watch and even participate in the discussions coming to the committee in January and early February of 2005.

Questions or comments? Please e-mail [jim.compton@seattle.gov](mailto:jim.compton@seattle.gov) or call us at (206) 684-8802. Thank you!